



## **Action over Ambition**

Delivering a Just Industrial Transition for  
a Sustainable Europe 2030

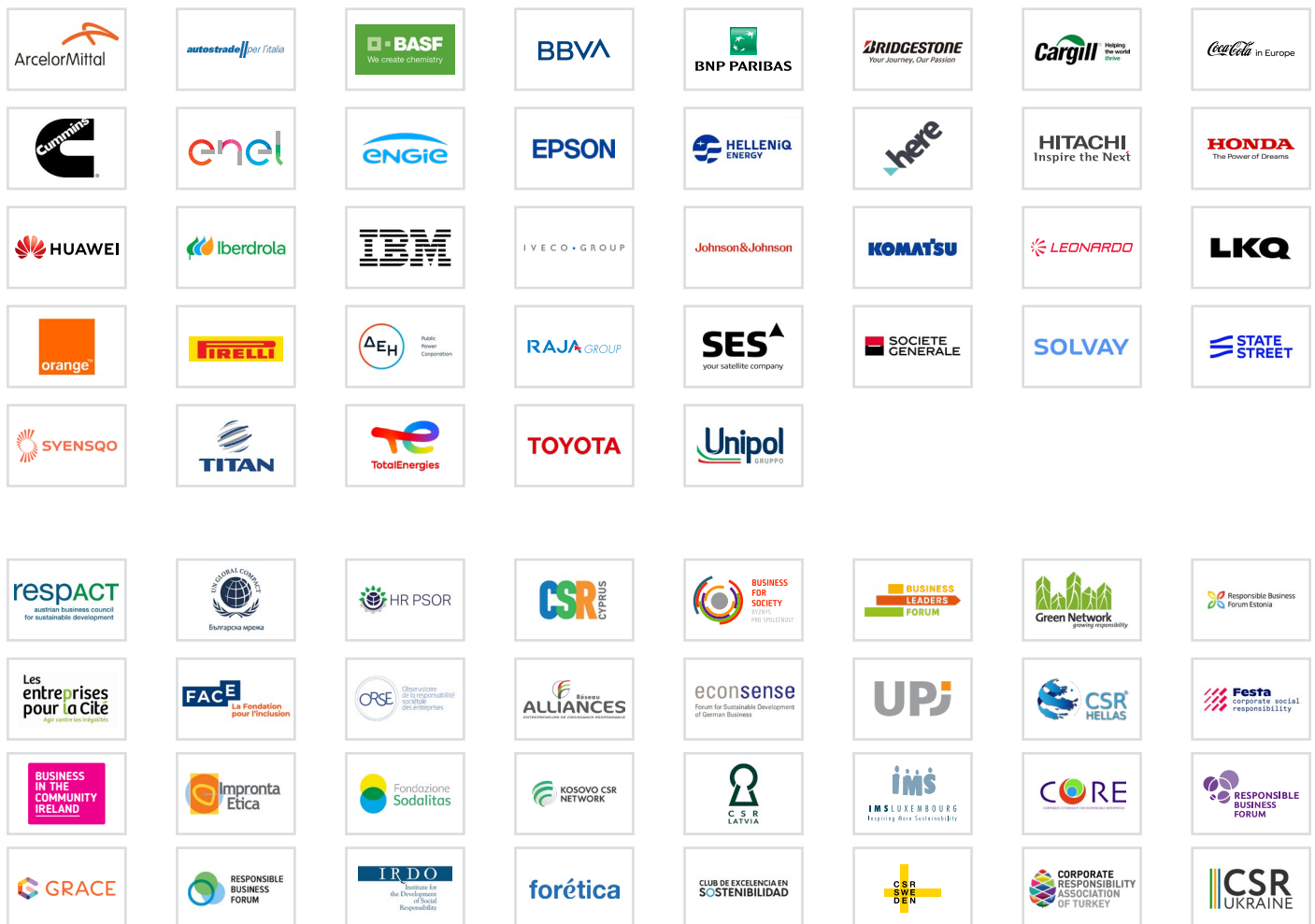
**The CSR Europe Business Manifesto 2024-2029**

# IN CELEBRATION OF JACQUES DELORS

Faithful to the esteemed former European Commission President, founding father of CSR Europe, and architect of the European Business Manifesto Against Social Exclusion, **we propose to articulate the European project around the fight against social exclusion.**

The persistence of poverty and social exclusion are not due to fate. They pose a systemic risk that only a steady political will and the engagement of all players can overcome.

Practically, we propose to make **the protection of the most vulnerable a cornerstone of all European policies and decisions**, whether it is social issues, access to rights, culture, health, environmental and climate policies, the industrial strategy, skills development, trade agreements or international partnerships.



*DISCLAIMER: This Business Manifesto is the result of an extensive collaboration involving contributions, dialogues, and consultations among CSR Europe Members and key stakeholders throughout 2023/2024. The content does not purport to represent the individual positions or views of each of CSR Europe members. None of them is expected to endorse every recommendation or view entailed in this Manifesto. To make our proposals more workable, further tools can be accessed in our Library on <https://www.csreurope.org/library>*

# OUR PROPOSAL

The upcoming European elections in June 2024 mark a pivotal moment to reshape Europe's trajectory. In anticipation of this crucial event, CSR Europe, the leading European Business Network for Corporate Sustainability and Responsibility, wants to pro-actively convey the perspectives of its members regarding the imperative for a just industrial transition, crucial for achieving a sustainable Europe by 2030. **This Manifesto is intended for the current and future policy leaders at both national and European levels, to inform their policy discussions and choices.**

Back in 2018, CSR Europe collaborated with 30 leaders from civil society in the European Commission's high-level multi-stakeholder platform on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to formulate proposals for an ambitious strategy for a Sustainable Europe 2030, contributing to the [Reflection Paper "Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030"](#). The following year, under our leadership, [380 CEOs called on businesses, civil society, and policymakers for a New Deal for Europe](#). Today, we trust our collective voice will resonate even more powerfully.

## TOGETHER, LET'S BRIDGE FROM AMBITION TO IMPLEMENTATION

Amidst uncertain times, Europeans are preparing to vote in the Spring of 2024 to elect the next European Parliament.

The wars in Ukraine and in the Middle East, coupled with additional geopolitical tensions, the spread of misinformation, competitive gaps, societal evolutions leading to increased inequalities, the climate and biodiversity crisis, as well as disruptive innovations, collectively impact our daily lives. Against the unease and polarisation they create within society, we have an economic, political, and **moral duty to collaborate** and advance relentlessly towards peace, sustainability, and prosperity together. The cost of inaction is staggering. Furthermore, as Europe accelerates its use of renewable energy, it must continue to secure its international competitiveness and supply chains, with the aim to also improve its efforts on climate and the respect of human dignity, while enhancing its strategic autonomy.

It is in this context that we need to build upon the lessons and legacies of the European Green Deal. We want to maintain the ambition for Europe to **achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050**, as the transition is an opportunity to strengthen Europe's resilience, competitiveness, and inclusiveness. Europe's leadership in setting ambitious sustainability goals and standards is commendable. The Paris Agreements and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the beacons of our journey. However, a smooth and inclusive implementation requires careful consideration of potential friction points and innovative solutions. Therefore, **a top priority now is IMPLEMENTATION**. How can we collectively engage to turn the European Green Deal goals, related policies and standards into tangible and actionable measures that accelerate the pace of the Just Transition? How can we address trade-offs while consolidating economic competitiveness, social stability, and democracy?

**We need a European Industrial Deal that establishes a stronger business case for a sustainability transformation and collaborative action.**

### INDUSTRIAL LEADERSHIP

A European Industrial Deal that revitalises the competitive edge of European industry in technologies, products, and services, ensuring a profitable and impactful transformation.

### COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION & SKILLS

A European Industrial Deal that catalyses collaboration within and across industries to scale up inclusive solutions, address skills shortages, and people's well-being amidst green, digital, and demographic shifts.

### ACCESS TO FINANCE FOR THE TRANSITION

A European Industrial Deal that streamlines access to funding and eliminates barriers, empowering stakeholders to achieve ambitious sustainability goals.

### POLICY WITH TRUST

A European Industrial Deal that strives for continuous improvement, strategic investments, and policy coherence through transparent dialogue and engagement, effectively addressing the concerns of civil society and business.

# OUR MANIFESTO

## Delivering a Just Industrial Transition for a Sustainable Europe 2030

As a community of practitioners, we know that sustainability that does not create value has no impact. But value creation that does not occur sustainably has no future. Also, the challenges ahead cannot be solved through regulation alone.

Together, we can build the capacities necessary to transform compliance into a catalyst for meaningful change. Leveraging the power of the private sector to innovate and unlock essential investments stands out as a crucial endeavour. In this spirit, we are proud to share our proposals. They reflect our eagerness to bridge the gap between ambition, norms, and action, demonstrating our commitment to fostering a sustainable future.

1

### For an Industry Alliance that fosters Inclusive Prosperity

We propose the creation of an **Industry Alliance** that builds upon the learnings of CSR Europe's [Business Roadmap](#), [Toolbox](#) and [Assessment for Just Transition](#) and the Business Commission to Tackle Inequality (BCTI)'s report "Tackling Inequality". Together with the European Commission, we have the power to equip enterprises of all sizes with best practices and tools that foster the creation of shared social value. By joining our forces, we can assist them in **transforming business models, workforces, communities, customers, and supply chains, making them more human-centric, resilient, and sustainable**. With the support of the European Commission, this Alliance can serve as a crucial bridge between the ambitious plans laid out - Just Transition, the Green Deal Industrial Plan, the Industry 5.0 Community of Practice - and their practical implementation.

2

### Bridge the gap on responsible materials

We propose the creation of **European Sector Alliances for due diligence and Local Sustainability Networks** to translate the EU's ambition for responsibly sourced materials into action.

- **The European Sector Alliances for Due Diligence** would serve as collaborative platforms, bringing together industries and stakeholders to monitor corporate respect for human rights while fostering dialogue and policy coherence.
- **Local Sustainability Networks** would bolster capacity-building and collaboration within the local ecosystems from which Europe is sourcing its raw materials, thus enhancing local job creation and sustainable livelihoods in the regions involved.

Overall, the two platforms would contribute to strengthen the engagement of enterprises and business platforms in the EU's Global Gateway, Team Europe's Initiatives, and current strategic partnerships.

### 3 Unlock sustainable finance via meaningful disclosure

**We propose to accelerate the Capital Markets Union (CMU)** and explore innovative financing mechanisms to attract fresh resources and talents towards sustainability. Such mechanisms include community-based project, impact bonds, blended funding, platform-based financing, incubators for start-ups, innovation accelerators, and guarantees.

We also believe that heightened disclosure requirements introduced by the EU's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) present an opportunity to drive sustainable development. Rather than viewing it solely as a compliance pursuit, the CSRD can be a tool to inform strategic decision-making. To support this perspective, we invite the European Commission to:

- Entrust and support business networks and associations in providing best practices, methodologies, and resources to **empower companies in using reporting standards as an opportunity**.
- Develop a comprehensive disclosure framework for social and governance matters, complementing the climate and environmental taxonomy. This effort should leverage the data gathered via the CSRD and the European Sustainability Reporting Standards without imposing additional burdens. We favour a voluntary two-layered **European Social Investment Framework** to ensure substantial corporate contribution to a Just Transition for the workforce, suppliers, customers, and communities, and to facilitate access to crucial social services for individuals in vulnerable situations.

### 4 Connect the environment with human behaviour

**We propose to the European Commission to explore with the industry and the scientific community further avenues to reach transition objectives** beyond the Science-Based Targets Initiative (SBTI) and the Science-based Targets for Nature (SBTFN). While SBTI and SBTFN support enterprises in their shift towards a low-carbon economy and environmental conservation, the integration of **behavioural science** offers a new dimension to empower governments and industries in the creation of products and services that not only meet environmental standards but also address social needs, hidden biases, and other barriers. The inclusion of behavioural science opens new avenues for the promotion of sustainable lifestyles, instilling a sense of ownership and shared responsibility.

### 5 For a European Sustainability Dialogue forging a common desire for progress

**To address the critical and complex challenges of our times, it is imperative that we unite our hopes, talents, and financial resources to build a secure, green and democratic future.** As much as the European Social Dialogue is playing a significant role in shaping EU's social policy, **we propose the creation of a European Sustainability Dialogue aimed at enhancing the responsiveness of the EU's governance to the evolving needs of both industry and civil society.** This proposed dialogue would serve as an inclusive and equitable platform, hosted by the European Commission, where every player can become, and trust the others to be, champions for implementing a greener and more inclusive Deal. A Platform with a holistic overview, for public, private, and civil society to:

- Address the growing scepticism surrounding sustainability by identifying both the trade-offs and co-benefits.
- Forge compromises that drive progress and policy cohesion.
- Prioritize the inclusion of those left behind and secure a sustainable legacy for all generations.



# Responsible Business, Better Future.

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## About CSR Europe

*CSR Europe is the leading European business network for Corporate Sustainability and Responsibility. With our corporate members, National Partner Organisations (NPOs), and Associated Partners, we unite, inspire & support over 10,000 enterprises at local, European and global level. We support businesses & industry sectors in their transformation and collaboration towards practical solutions and sustainable growth. We are for systemic change. Following the SDGs, we want to co-build with the European leaders and stakeholders an overarching strategy for a Sustainable Europe 2030.*

*On 25-26 June 2024, CSR Europe will bring together leading businesses, policymakers, and civil society representatives for **the European Sustainable Industry Summit** - "Pioneering the next generation of corporate sustainability practices".*